

No check on industries polluting water

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*Environment
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LAHORE, Jan 19: Over 175 industrial units, including one owned by the Lahore district Nazim, on Multan Road are illegally disposing of their waste in the canal, ponds and open spaces.

The waste is not only polluting irrigation channels, but also the subsoil water used by the residents of 10 housing colonies where these factories are located.

The colonies are Mohlanwal, Chuhng, Muzammal Town, Deen Town, Hayat Kot, Tahir Colony, Kot Muhammad Husain, Shahpur Kanjran (including six adjacent villages), Gupa Ray and Nawar Pind.

The district environment department fears if this practice is not stopped, these areas may become another 'Manga Mandi' where a number of cases of bone-deformity had surfaced a couple of years ago due to the consumption of contaminated water.

A number of residents of these colonies have filed applications against these factories with the district environment department, but no action has so far been taken against them.

Naik Mohammad, a resident of Mohlanwal, said some chemical factories used to dispose of their effluents in open spaces, spreading diseases. He said the poison was also rendering the subsoil water unfit for human consumption. A majority of the residents use hand-pumps to get under-ground water.

Following the complaints, he



said, the environment department served notices on these factories but to no avail. "Now I have requested the department to force police to take action against the culprits," he said.

A department official said the

department had received many complaints regarding cattle abortion in these colonies due to polluted water.

The nature of these factories include chemical, rubber, drug, electric sheets, cotton yarn,

flour, knitted fabric, metal rod, angle iron, aluminium scrap, tin sheets, building material, lubricants, herbs, transformer repairing, metal, plastic and brass scrap, corrugated paper sheet, pigments, marble slabs,

diesel generators, ingredients of pesticides, salt lumps, garment warehouses, gamma sterilization and industrial machinery repairing workshops. Only a handful of them reportedly have water treatment plants.

The Able Pipe Factory on the Multan Road, reportedly owned by District Nazim Mian Amir, discharges waste in the canal. However, a spokesman for the city district government said the factory was not in operation at present.

Irrigation department chief engineer Waqar Ahmad said no industry could release its effluents in the canal under the Canal and Drain Act, 1873. But the industry owners are least bothered about the notices issued by the department.

He said the department was looking forward towards the Environment Protection Department to take punitive action against the violators under the Pakistan Environment Protection Act, 1997.

District environment officer Tariq Zaman said the department had served notices on violators under the Punjab Local Government Ordinance, 2001, and would move the court on non-compliance. He said the department was also planning to develop two drains on the Multan Road for the purpose.

The EPD had initiated a Self-Monitoring and Reporting Tools programme in April last for the provincial industries. Under the programme, over 6,600 industries had to submit reports to the EPD regarding the pollution their industries were causing, but only five of them have turned up so far, according to EPD officials.